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POEMS

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P O E M S

SEUMAS O'SULLIVAN

MAUNSEL AND COMPANY, LTD
96 MIDDLE ABBEY STREET, DUBLIN

1912

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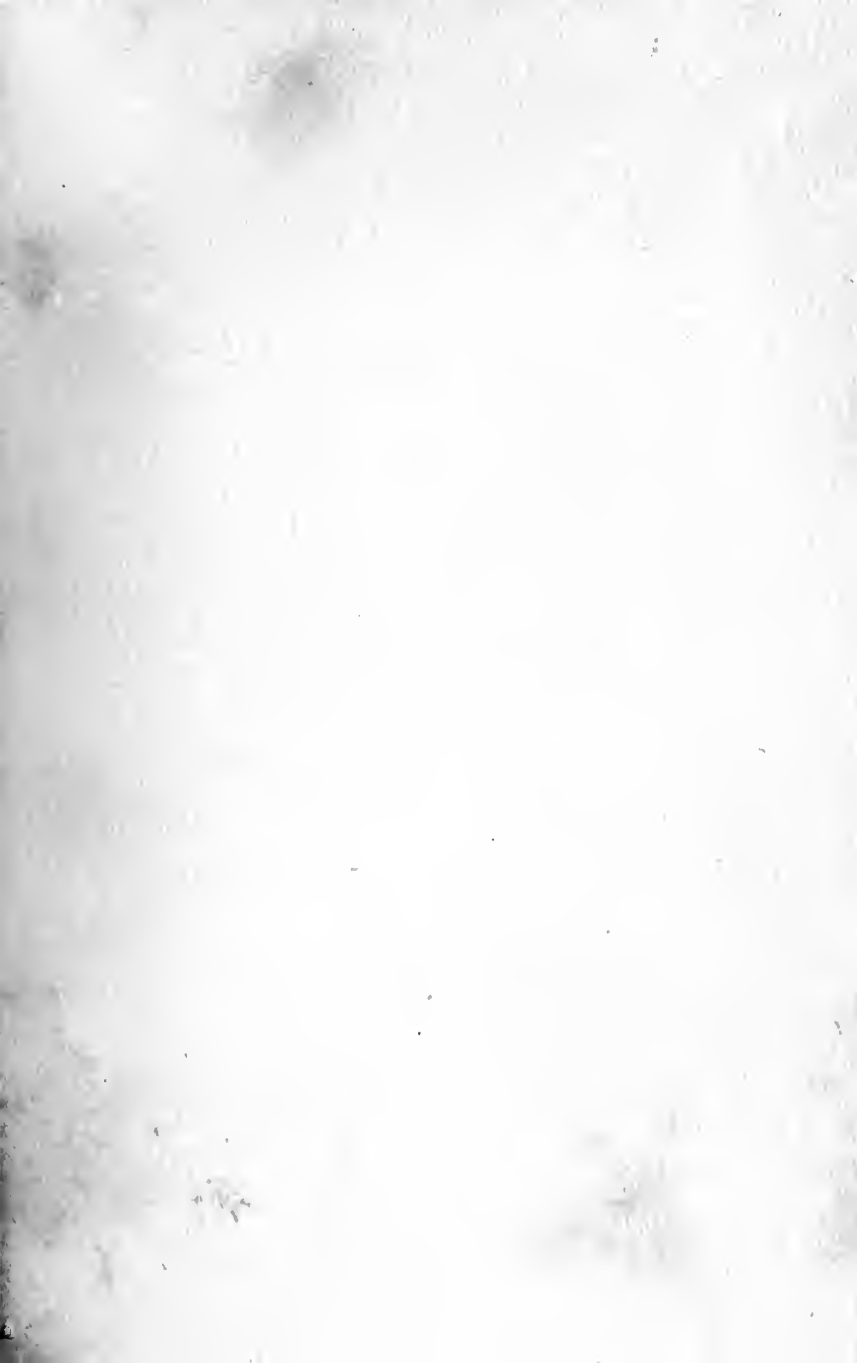
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NOTE

In addition to the poems which are now published for the first time, the present collection contains a reprint of nearly all the poems in *The Twilight People*, 1905, which has been out of print for some years; a reprint in full of *Verses Sacred and Profane*, 1908, and a selection from *The Earth Lover*, a small volume issued for private circulation in 1909.

S. O'S.

Dublin, 1912.



*THOUGH, late in a too travelled world,
From no far land our sails are furled
For harbour, yet, perchance, we bring
Tokens of further wandering :
For, it may be, our sadder hearts
Have dealt in more enchanted marts
Than those old singers, and our eyes
Have gathered costlier merchandise.
Witness if in our song there be,
For that fierce olden ecstasy,
For that old singing wild and brave,
Magic of wood and wind and wave,
For old high thoughts that clashed like swords,
A wisdom winnowed from light words.*

THE TWILIGHT PEOPLE

IT is a whisper among the hazel bushes ;
It is a long, low, whispering voice that fills
With a sad music the bending and swaying rushes :
It is a heart-beat deep in the quiet hills.

Twilight people, why will you still be crying,
Crying and calling to me out of the trees?
For under the quiet grass the wise are lying,
And all the strong ones are gone over the seas.

And I am old, and in my heart at your calling
Only the old dead dreams a-fluttering go,
As the wind, the forest wind, in its falling
Sets the withered leaves fluttering to and fro.

THE SHEEP

SLOWLY they pass
In the grey of the evening
Over the wet road,
A flock of sheep.
Slowly they wend
In the grey of the gloaming,
Over the wet road
That winds through the town.
Slowly they pass,
And gleaming whitely
Vanish away
In the grey of the evening.
Ah, what memories
Loom for a moment,
Gleam for a moment,
And vanish away,
Of the white days
When we two together
Went in the evening,
Where the sheep lay :
We two together,
Went with slow feet
In the grey of the evening
Where the sheep lay.

Whitely they gleam
For a moment and vanish
Away in the dimness
Of sorrowful years :
Gleam for a moment,
All white, and go fading
Away in the greyness
Of sundering years.

THE PORTENT

PALE shadows, one by one, about my bed
Came trooping, with bowed head ;
And sad, and calm dead eyes—
Like frozen lake-water
No wind can stir—
And looked on me a while
Like those faint forms of the belovéd dead,
Some dream has won out of their paradise :
A little while, and then
Faded away from me.
Ah, surely thus,
And with such eyes looked sad Eurydice ;
When from the arms of Orpheus,
And from the dawning of glad golden days,
She sank down suddenly again
To that cold throne
In Lethe's sunless ways.
So they went vanishing away, but one,
More sorrowful than all
Returned to me alone ;
And looked on me as if it would have stirred,
But feared, with some dread word,
Silence more terrible,
And stood a while in doubt
Swaying about :
But came to me at last, and stooped, and said,
Half-whispering, "*She is dead.*"

SAINT ANTHONY

ALL day Saint Anthony, twixt tear and moan
Had battled with weak heart, and now
almost

His strength had failed him, when the phantom
host

Suddenly vanished and he was alone.

Half fearing still, he raised from the cold stone
His head sweat-bathed and weary, and his heart
Failed him almost, for by his side one stood
Lovelier than all the vanished multitude.

No longer he resisted, but stretched up
Weak hands desirous, wildly thrown apart,
Past the white limbs, past the round breasts, to
where

The long and delicate tendrils of light hair
Caressed, wind-rippled, the brow's ivory.
Then, shrieking, on his face, Saint Anthony
Fell, for he knew the splendour of that face,
The eyes that, full of pity, full of grace,
Looked on him from the white brow's sanctity.
It was the Virgin Mother of his Lord.

Prostrate, half senseless, in his swoon he
heard

The voice which sang his infant Lord to rest,
Sound clear through the wild tumult of his
breast,

“I, too, was beautiful, O Anthony.”

THE HERDSMAN

O HERDSMAN, driving your slow
twilight flock
By darkening meadow and hedge and
grassy rath,
The trees stand shuddering as you pass by ;
The suddenly falling silence is your path.

Over my heart too, the shadows are creeping,
But on my heart for ever they will lie :
O happy meadows and trees and rath and hedges,
The twilight and all its flock will pass you by.

PRAISE

DEAR, they are praising your beauty,
The grass and the sky :
The sky in a silence of wonder,
The grass in a sigh.

I too would sing for your praising,
Dearest, had I
Speech as the whispering grass,
Or the silent sky.

These have an art for the praising
Beauty so high.
Sweet, you are praised in a silence,
Sung in a sigh.

THE MONK

I GO with silent feet and slow
As all my black-robed brothers go ;
I dig a while and read and pray,
So portion out my pious day
Until the evening time, and then
Work at my book with cunning pen.
If she would turn to me a while,
If she would turn to me and smile,
My book would be no more to me
Than some forgotten phantasy,
And God no more unto my mind
Than a dead leaf upon the wind.

POPLARS

SURELY no lovelier forms their
shadowy kingdom owns
Than these tall poplars bending,
swaying, each upon
Its own light shadow, even as those
unbodied ones
Swaying in some sad dance by shady
Acheron.

ADORATION

WHITE brow, as faultless pure
As the watch tower
Of some white city,
Reared by gods in dim eternal story
Above the sea of time :
Round you light tresses, delicate,
Wind-blown, wander and climb
Immortal, transitory.

Red lips whose curv'd pride
Is still belied
By soft eyes forest-wild and full of pity
For all sorrow.

White hands, foam-frail you seem ;
A vanishing gleam
On the light breaking wave of beauty's tide :
You hold my destiny,
And the fate of all beside
Who follow
Eternally by ways apart
Over enchanted ground,

Lit with the radiance of no earthly day,
Where Angus' heart,
Burning through his stringed lute,
Lures with a music sweeter than all sound
Wild-hearted ones, blind wanderers,
To go, with foot-fall mute,
By his own way.

THE BALLAD OF THE FIDDLER

HE had played by the cottage fire
Till the dancing all was done,
But his heart kept up the music
When the last of the folk had gone.

So he came through the half-door softly
And wandered up the hill,
In the glow of his heart's desire
That was on the music still.

And he passed the blackthorn thicket,
And he heard the branches groan,
As they bowed beneath the burden
Of the white fruit of the moon.

And he came to the fairy circle
Where none but the wise may sit :
And blindness was on him surely
For he sat in the midst of it.

And maybe his heart went dreaming,
Or maybe his thoughts went wide,
But he took his battered old fiddle
And he took the bow from his side.

And he said, "I will play them such music
As never a fairy heard."

He said, "I will play them the music
I stole from the throat of a bird."

And the sound of his lilt went straying
By valley and stream and sedge
Till the little white stars went dancing
Along the mountain's edge.

And things came out of the bushes
And out of the grassy mound
And joined their hands in a circle
And danced to the fiddle's sound.

And quicker and sweeter and stranger
The notes came hurrying out
And joined with a shriek and a whistle
In the dance of the Goblin Rout.

And all night long on the green lands
They danced in a 'wilderer ring,
And every note of the fiddle
Was the shriek of a godless thing.

And when the winter morning
Came whitely up the glen,
The Fiddler's soul fled whistling
In the rout of the Fairy Men.

IN MERCER STREET

I

A PIPER

A PIPER in the streets to-day
Set up, and tuned, and started to play,
And away, away, away on the tide
Of his music we started ; on every side
Doors and windows were opened wide,
And men left down their work and came,
And women with petticoats coloured like flame
And little bare feet that were blue with cold,
Went dancing back to the age of gold,
And all the world went gay, went gay,
For half an hour in the street to-day.

IN MERCER STREET

II

RAGS AND BONES

GATHER 'em, gather 'em, gather 'em O,
He shouts monotonous, jolting slow
His little truck of rags and bones
Over the uneven cobble stones.
Ever about him cling and crowd
The waifs, a many-coloured cloud
All shrilly clamouring, mad with joy,
For sticky sweet, or painted toy.
Hardly a breath is in the air,
Yet every little windmill there
Goes whirling wildly, as though it knew
With every turn what rapture flew
Through all the heavy street, and stirred
The stagnant air, till the sad bird,
High on the wall, takes heart to sing
And hails the simulated Spring.

IN MERCER STREET

III

LARK'S SONG

ON Mercer Street the light slants
down,
And straightway an enchanted town
Is round him, pinnacle and spire
Flash back, elate, the sudden fire ;
And clear above the silent street
Falls suddenly and strangely sweet
The lark's song. Bubbling, note on note
Rise fountain-like, o'erflow and float
Tide upon tide, and make more fair
The magic of the sunlit air.
No more the cage can do him wrong,
All is forgotten save his song :
He has forgot the ways of men,
Wide heaven is over him again,
And round him the wide fields of dew
That his first infant mornings knew,
E'er yet the dolorous years had brought
The hours of captive anguish, fraught
With the vile clamour of the street,

The insult of the passing feet,
The torture of the daily round,
The organ's blasphemy of sound.
Sudden some old swift memory brings
The knowledge of forgotten wings,
He springs elate and panting falls
At the rude touch of prison walls.
Silence. Again the street is grey :
Shut down the windows—Work-a-day.

NELSON STREET

To P. J. H.

THERE is hardly a mouthful of air
In the room where the breakfast is set,
For the blind is still down though it's late,
And the curtains are redolent yet
Of tobacco smoke, stale from last night.
There's the little bronze teapot, and there
The eggs on the blue willow-plate,
And the sleepy canary, a hen,
Starts faintly her chirruping tweet
And I know, could she speak, she would say,
"Hullo there—what's wrong with the light?
Draw the blind up, let's look at the day."
I see that it's Monday again,
For the man with the organ is there;
Every Monday he comes to the street
(Lest I, or the bird there, should miss
Our count of monotonous days)
With his reed-organ, wheezy and sweet,
And stands by the window and plays
"There's a Land that is Fairer than This."

IN CUFFE STREET

THE senses stifle in this narrow lane,
Where the fierce merciless summer sun
beats down

On rows of stinking fish, and vegetables
Half rotten, and tortured flowers with stems of
wire

Enforced to live beyond their fragrant hour,
A horrid death-in-life. O God of Heaven,
Who made the fish to go in cool green ways,
And flowers to laugh beside the water's edge,
And autumn fruit to lurk in odorous shade,
If thou rememb'rest Eden, Lord, look down
On this thy world, defaced by usage vile ;
And send thy fire, and purge away the sin
Of those who, losing Eden, would destroy
That Eden left unto thy innocents.

NORTH GREAT GEORGE'S STREET

LAST night I lay awake and watched a tree
Outside my window up against the sky :
An old smoke-blackened elm tree gaunt
and high.

First in the darkness I could only see
A something shadowed indeterminately.
But as the slow, faint dawn came creeping on
I saw the boughs untangle one by one,
Then through the darkness came some white
sea-bird

And hung above the garden with strange cries
Circling. And with it came a little breeze
Over the branches of the neighbouring trees
Until it reached the elm tree, and just stirred
The little topmost branch, shaped like a cup
Delicately, and then the sun rose up.

PATRICK'S CLOSE

IN Patrick's Close this morning
The larks sang out so well,
So brave and sweet and clearly,
That you could hardly tell
They did not sing in freedom
Above some heathery dell.

And daffodils in baskets
Held out so brave and gay,
Their cups of golden laughter
You'd never know that they
Had drunk their fill of sunlight,
Where skies are never grey.

Only the thin-faced children
They looked so grave and old,
You'd know at once for certain
Though you were never told,
They were but exiled wanderers
Out of the Age of Gold.

THE FUNERALS

AS I go down Glasnevin way
The funerals pass me day by day,
Stately, sombre, stepping slow
The white-plumed funeral horses go,
With coaches crawling in their wake
A long and slow black glittering snake
(Inside of every crawling yoke
Silent cronies sit and smoke).
Ever more as I grow thinner
Day by day without a dinner,
Every day as I go down
I meet the funerals leaving town ;
Soon my procession will be on view,
A hearse, and maybe, a coach or two.

CHILD'S FANCY

I

DEAD LETTERS

EVERY night a man comes down our street,
Without a sound he comes on silent feet !
But every single night at two o'clock
He creeps along, for I can hear him knock
At almost all the houses in his round,
And the doors open soft without a sound,
And he hands in the letters then, I know,
For folk who died a hundred years ago.

CHILD'S FANCY

II

OMENS

SOMETHING rattled the window pane
Last night, it wasn't wind or rain,
And all the fowl in the yard below
Began to flap their wings and crow,
(Something frightened all the fowl !)
And then a dog began to howl.
A dog began to howl and whine
And I knew well (for 'tis a sign
'Tis a sign, I don't know why,
That a soul is passing by),
I knew well as I lay in bed
That someone in the street was dead.
And in the morning, sure enough,
I saw a piece of that black stuff
Hanging on the house next door.
(But wasn't it strange to know before ?)

NIGHT

After the French of Henri de Regnier

AN odorous shade lingers the fair day's ghost,
And the frail moon now by no wind is tost,
And shadow-laden scents of tree and grass
Build up again a world our eyes have lost.

Now all the wood is but a murmured light
Where leaf on leaf falls softly from the height ;
The hidden freshness of the river seems
A breath that mingles with the breath of night.

And time and shade and silence seem to say,
Close now your eyes nor fear to die with day ;
For if the daylight win to earth again,
Will not its beauty also find a way ?

And flower and stream and forest, will they not
Bring back to-morrow, as to-day they brought,
This shadow-hidden scent—this odorous shade ?
Yea, and with more abiding memories fraught.

STANZAS—I

After the French of Henri de Regnier

“Je ne veux de personne auprès de ma Tristesse.”

NAY, sweet, my grief and I, we may not brook
Even your light footfall, even your shy look,
Even your light hand that touches carelessly
The faded ribbon in the closed-up book.

Let be ; my door is closed for this one day,
Nor may morn's freshness through my window stray :
My heart is a guest chamber, and awaits
Sorrow, a sweet shy guest from far away.

Shyly it comes from its far distant home,
O keep a silence lest its voice be dumb ;
For every man that lives and laughs and loves
Must hear that whisper when his hour has come.

STANZAS—II

After the French of Henri de Regnier

“J’ai gardé ce miroir où vous vous êtes vue.”

I HAVE kept still untroubled that clear tide
Deep wherein lay
Your image in its crystal unconcealed
A Summer’s day.

For still the sleeping water, all unrest,
Stirs faintly deep ;
As though some dream of that old loveliness
Troubled its sleep.

And, sweet, my heart grown sad with long desire
Holds hidden too
A memory of the swift and lovely grace
Your girlhood knew.

ON MADAME ST. JULIEN

From the French of Voltaire

IN my hermitage secure,
Hermit dwelt I meek and pure,
Passionless, for night and day
All my heart in ashes lay :
Then I saw you, and desire
Wakened soft a sleeping fire,
Softly wakened, till you came
Blew the sleeping fire to flame.
Now behold me once again
Pray (but to *St. Julien*).

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD

From the Japanese

NAY, but he is so young, and feet so small
Must stumble on the way, and he will fall.
I will go down to him who rules the night
And say, "Lo, this I give thee, so thou take
The little lad upon thy back, and make
His path over the sunless meadow light."

A MADONNA

A Picture by Beatrice Elvery

THIS is the very face of her who bent
Above the cradle of her infant Lord,
Murmuring, as mothers murmur, many a word
Of wisdom infantile and sweet ; or went
With grave proud grace, intent on household things
Yet hearing in the calm of the hushed hours,
For token of the presence of great powers
Assistant, clamour of space-hidden wings.
Draw nigh, O foolish worshippers who mock
With pious woe of sainted imagery
The kingly-human presence of your God.
Draw near, and with new reverence gaze on her.
See you, these hands have toiled, these feet have trod
In all a woman's business ; bend the knee.
For this of very certainty is she
Ordained of heavenly hierarchies to rock
The cradle of the infant carpenter.

TO A GREEK POET

O HAPPY-HEARTED singer of a day
So golden that its very memory
Can stir the heart to sing its ecstasy,
A rivulet to the ocean of your lay.
O heart of golden fire, could you not stay
This leaden age that never more will see
White Aphrodite's naked majesty
Gleam suddenly out of the white sea-spray,
Or Bacchus laughing through his wine-wet hair?
For chastity that wont to dwell apart
Timid and veiled, seeks now no hidden place,
But like a strumpet certain of her art
Shows in the daylight unashamed her face,
And Love your Lord is crownless everywhere.

VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE

FAIR maids, ye are but queens by beauty's right,
And with your years your sovereignty decays ;
Then think upon the errors of your ways.

O think, ye maids, while yet your eyes are bright
And shine elate with that high conquering light,
That ye will surely come on darker days,
As dew caught lingering by the morning rays,
As fleetest day that's clipt by surly night.
And you, poor fool, that waste your breath in sighs,
Mouse-hearted lover, lift your head and laugh,
Lift up your head and list to me, and quaff
This toast I give, "To any lady's eyes."
For one bee wanting who will burn the hive ?
And beauty is a sea where all may dive.

A POET

THE music of the bending river reed
That hears the whisper of the wind of
Spring

Was in his song : you would have thought
indeed

That Pan himself had taught him how to sing.

But he had wisdom Pan could never teach,

Nor any Faun or Satyr ever knew,

A sorrow and a joy beyond the reach

Of any one of all their heartless crew.

He sang the joy of boyhood's careless day,

And all the sweet distress of maidenhood,

And knowledge proved in every lightest lay

Of things whereon the hearts of poets brood ;

And strong he was to wrestle with and throw

The fear no deathless thing can ever know.

CARMEN NATALE

To a Poet, 1907

THE strength your life has gathered where
the bay
Round blue Ben Edar into foam is hurled,
Bear him sea-wise who stretches forth to-day
Small hands towards the tumult of the world,
And all the sweetness that your spring-time knew—
When Pan, who taught the river reeds to sing,
Set your heart singing—fold him like the blue
And multitudinous-mooded sky of spring.
To find earth's music, fronting all its strife,
Be his who comes to earth a very king,
Babe Royal of the strength and song of life.
Nor should he lack for me true welcoming,
O friend, had I the secret of thy song
Wedded to life and strong as life is strong.

GLASNEVIN

October 9th, 1904

THEY peer about his grave with curious eyes,
And for his sin they pity him, their chief,
With miserable mockery of grief;
Beyond their littleness serene he lies,
Nor heeds the insult of their sympathies,
This man pre-eminent by strong belief
In his own heart—a little while, for brief
The resting-time is when a hero dies.

Near to God's heart by greatness of thy heart,
And nearer by thy sin, O strong of will !
Send out thy spirit like a sword and kill
Their littleness ; no longer dwell apart :
Send forth thy spirit like a flame, and burn
Through these a pathway for thy soul's return.

IN AN IRISH THEATRE

WE are not kingly born :
Why should we mourn
The Sons of Usna left companionless,
Deirdre's sad loveliness ?
Surely it fits us better to be gay
In this our little day,
And singing dance, and flash our midget wings
Over the surfaces of things,
Until the sorrow-heavy years return
Bearing full many a sorrow, many an urn
Wherein earth's kingliest ones so long have slept
Austere, unwept.
For it may be when we have danced our round
And known all joys that are above the ground,
That we too will be taught in some sad school
How to mourn for the kingly and beautiful.

A FIDDLER

ALL day long about the town,
He had wandered up and down
From street to street, from drink to drink;
At evening he began to think,
“Better, far better, to be dead
Where no thought could find out my head;
Lying in some green place apart
No sorrow could find out my heart;
Laid in the quiet there alone
I should have all my dreams my own:
For, though they know not, when I play
(These fools) I give my dreams away.”

REMEMBRANCE

DEEP in some ancient forest fragrant
with primeval dew
Two stately forest trees with inter-
mingling boughs we grew ;
When I went fierce in gold and black, by
cave and rock and pool
And wooded way, you went beside me
lithe and beautiful :
When challenging the light exultant through
the air I sped
You flew beside me, all the heaven was our
bridal bed.
And when beneath the soundless deep of
watery ways I went
For you I fought the hosts of ocean, proud
and jubilant.
Ah, gladly would I go again upon a way
that brings
Me here, to read again the tale of all my
wanderings
In your dark eyes that for a moment look
with love grown bold,
And droop 'neath gentle lids, half conscious
of the things they hold.

THE GLEAM

BUNDLE the gods away :
Richer than Danaan gold,
The whisper of leaves in the rain,
The secrets the wet hills hold.
To follow a leaf on the wind,
And joy in the following :
Yea, in the following find
More than the wise man found,
Merlin the foolish wise
Who followed on magical ground
A vision beyond the eyes
Of any of mortal born ;
Wisdom the highest this,
Mortal so shalt thou live,
And living heed not the scorn
Of the gods in their lonely bliss,
Therefore guard well thy heart.
O earth-born, harbour thou there
No vision but earth can give
No rapture but earth may share.

THE LAND WAR

Prelude

SORROW is over the fields,
The fields that can never know
The joy that the harvest yields
When the corn stands row on row.

But alien the cattle feed
Where many a furrow lies,
For the furrows remember the seed,
And the men have a dream in their eyes.

Not so did the strong men dream
E'er the fathers of these were born,
And their sons have remembered their deeds
As the fields have remembered the corn.

THE SEDGES

I WHISPERED my great sorrow
To every listening sedge ;
And they bent, bowed with my sorrow
Down to the water's edge.

But she stands and laughs lightly
To see me sorrow so,
Like the light winds that laughing
Across the water go.

If I could tell the bright ones
That quiet-hearted move,
They would bend down like the sedges
With the sorrow of love.

But she stands laughing lightly
Who all my sorrow knows,
Like the little wind that laughing
Across the water blows.

CALVARY

SWEETHEART, be brave and face
 with me
The thing that we have done ;
Lo, in the quiet garden now
He prayeth all alone—
The Lord we have betrayed ; yet we
May go with Him to Calvary.

Even now the brutal soldiery,
With lust of slaughter mad,
Wait by the quiet garden, where
He went secure and glad.
Sweetheart, there is sad comfort, see,
Three crosses crown our Calvary.

“THE LOVE-GIFT OF SORROW”

FOR all my sorrow I have been more glad
Than those that know but joy, for I have had
This thought that is of all my thought more near
Than my own heart, this thought for solace. Dear,
In the long years to come when you have grown
More gentle, almost lovelier, having known
The things that wait about a woman's heart ;
One day when you have turned from all apart
And come to your own self again, a thought
Will come to you, immortal, being wrought
Out of all love and sorrow in my own heart :
And you will bend your head lower and sigh
Because of that great love that you passed by.

A VISION OF HOSTING

WHAT have the heavens for their
wonder of starry glory
To show like these?
I have seen in the flashing of their white
swords the story
Of victories.

Forth they go, the conquerors, the path of
their going,
To the world's end :
Greet the stars, their brothers, and shout in
the sunrise knowing
The sun their friend.

Forth they go, uncaring, as fitteth immortals,
How the quest ends :
Here, or beyond red seas, in the flaming
portals
They will greet friends.

WINTER

WHY will you plague me with your loveliness?
Can you not see
How vain is every grace and each caress?
Prithee let be.

Your beauty is no less than when we kept
The summer that we knew ;
But it is winter, sweet, you should have slept
The winter through.

For what avail your kisses and your sighs, .
The lovely splendour of your tear-bright eyes ?
Less than a little wine
Poured out upon the grave
Of some old glad and brave
Dead singer of the vine.

OUT OF THE STRONG, SWEETNESS

HALF-LIGHT of the dawn of
the world,
Tremulous watery plains,
And chaos half dispelled
From the nebulous sea and land,
And through the gloom
The eyes of the gods.

Eyes of the gods, and silence,
And sense of the laughter of gods ;
And there alone in the grey,
Slender and gentle and shy,
Large-eyed with wonder, and trembling,
A herd of deer.

And whisper less loud than a thought,
Little ones gentle and shy,
Deep in the heart of the wood
Waits you, the silence, your home.
Hide from the gods and their laughter
In leafy ways.

THE ONLOOKER

I HEAR their singing fierce and high
And now they pass me one by one
And scorn me that I stay alone
And look with imperturbéd eye.
They march to battle unafraid
Because of songs that I have made.

And one, in passing, turns to me
And spits upon me ; and my sword
Springs to him of its own accord.
I hold it fast and let him be ;
His coward heart is unafraid
Because of songs that I have made.

With fierce-flung banners floating brave
And song to speed your conquering
(Your banners are the hopes I sing,
Your songs the courage that I gave) ;
March on, nor waste a thought on me
Who sang you into victory.

THE EARTH-LOVER

HE had no joy when Spring had
spread
On hill and meadow, field and fold,
Its cloths of silver and of gold ;
No joy—he went dispirited,
“ All their young beauty will have fled
E’er Summer’s splendid tale is told.”

And when the Summer burned and glowed
And coloured all the air and made
In field and forest, hill and glade,
The hours go glad and gay and proud :
He went as one who bears a load,
“ Lo ! the full blossoms fall,” he said.

Nor when the mellowing Autumn moon
Hung still in quivering mists of gold
On hill and meadow, field and fold,
Had he more joy, for night and noon
He thought, “ Now Winter cometh soon
And that old story is all told.”

And when white winter's icy sway
Held lake and hill and river-tide,
He went with sorrow dumb, and sighed
Because he heard how far away
By frozen waters night and day,
The herons wild with hunger cried.

EVENING

I WILL go out and meet the evening hours
And greet them one by one as friend greets
friend,

Where many a tall poplar summit towers
On summit, shrines of quietness that send
Their silence through the blue air like a wreath
Of sacrificial flame unwavering

In the deep evening stillness, when no breath
Sets the faint tendrils floating on light wing
Over the long dim fields mist-islanded.

I will go out and meet them one by one,
And learn the things old times have left unsaid,
And read the secrets of an age long gone,
And out of twilight and the darkening plain
Build up all that old quiet world again.

EVE AND LILITH

WITH Adam I have mourned for Lilith
 flown,
 Yea, walked disconsolate in Paradise
Through the green ways of Eden unconsolated,
Though by my side young Eve went wondering
And whispering with her young grace that made
The loveliness of Eden lovelier.
Till, finding unavailing all her ways
And each caress : taught by her woman's love,
That is more subtle than the mind of God,
She found, devised, and perfected a plan
Which, brought to full fruition, closed on me
For evermore, that Eden she abhorred,
Where my sad heart could have but thought
 of one
Who walked there in the morning of the world.

AT THE LODGE

I WONDER if they ever thought they knew him,
The thing that sat amongst them on the chair,
If they ever really heard a god speak through him
When his words were like a laughter in the air!

Knew the world their highest dreams could but
despair of,
Paradisal, of imagination wrought,
Was the world he lived in, knew best, breathed
the air of,
Held as hardly worthy of a moment's thought.

Knew that this, the world they scorned as past
redeeming,
By the passions and the senses stormed and stained,
Was the very Tir-na-nOge of all his dreaming,
Unimaginable, holy, unattained.

Oh! the folly of their wisdom, still unseeing
That the flaming of the heart he would conceal
Was the very life and soul, the pulse and being
Of a world no foolish wisdom could reveal.

FROM A VERSE EPISTLE

To T. G. K.

LAST night the world seemed very fair and sweet
Because a barrel-organ in Grafton Street
Was playing something—nothing new at all,
Something or other out of a music-hall;
And yet, as I passed by, it seemed to me
That something of old earth's first ecstasy,
Came in the halting measure of the song
And stirred my very soul, and made me long
For some quick knowledge, that would give me all
The reason of the moment's festival.

.
I wonder how it is that when we try
To find what the world's joy is guided by
We have but started, when we are again
Launched out on to a very sea of pain,
And sorrow, and all things that wrong the light,
Because they have so much kinship with the night.

.
O friend, I think they are the truly wise
Who take, and take, and never analyze,
For still a wise acceptance seems to be
The very crown of all philosophy.

A VERSE-EPISTLE

IT seems but yesterday since you and I
On these same rocks, under the self-same sky,
Lay all day, naked, while the mirrored sun
Beat on us from the blue, till we grew one
With all that cloudless world of sea and land:
Knowing a life we could but understand
Each through the other's silence: and too wise
To still with any speech such silences.
And now there is no blue sky anywhere
In all the wet grey world, but in the air
The salt wind stings with sense of storm and death,
And silence holds the heart and stills the breath.
Yet in the very silence once again
I look to you out of a world of men,
By sorrow grown forgetful of the Spring
That hides beyond the grey of everything.
And in the silence I once more have won
The life we lived together in the sun.
And thus it is that I have come to know
There is no way henceforth that we must go—
O friend, I think even when we are dead
There is no path whatever we can tread,
But each will find the other by his side

Within the call of silence, though the tide
Of Stygian waters dashed on us, and made
The very ghosts go howling and afraid.
I know I will remember even as now
The courage of the heart I knew, the brow
Bright still with some unrisen sun of hope:
I will remember these, and I will grope
Even in the darkness, I will stretch my hand
And find you there, and we will understand,
Where silence, such as holds the heaven, keeps
The solitude of those unsounded deeps.

IN WINTER

TO me who sat beside a frozen lake,
Because I had forgotten the grey sky
And the bleak wind and the red sun that
glowed,

A candle at the feet of the dead world,
A thought came winging from some gladder place,
Some sheltered cavern where old Boreas,
Father of all the winds, with sleepy eyes
Lulls the young winds asleep with lullabies.

.

Or farther still, where banished Autumn sits
In some unbreathing valley, fenced about
With silence. Folding great arms motionless
Beneath his bowed head, sorrow-heavy, and dreams
Of quiet places and a harvest moon,
And many-coloured woods and odorous leaves,
And hazel branches heavy with brown fruit.

.

And yet I had no joy of all my thought,
Because a heron wild with hunger screamed
By that old dún across the frozen lake.

A COTTAGER

THE rafters blacken year by year,
And the roof-beams under that once were green.
'Twas himself that cut them and brought them
here,
But who has count of the years between?

And Autumn comes, and its withering,
And Spring again and the fields are green.
Winter and Summer and Autumn and Spring,
Yet who has count of the years between?

The big old clock by the window screen
Keeps count of the hours both day and night.
I mind the time when its face was white,
But who has time of the years between?

IF THERE BE ANY GODS

WILD birds flying across the moon,
Sedges singing beside the pool,
Long hills quiet for mile on mile,
Water ruffled by winter wind,
All that the fields in their silence tell—
These are the gifts of the Gods to men.

CRUSADERS

WHEN you are cruel all my thoughts arise
Like brave crusaders, and with hearts elate
Fare forth to battle and a land that lies
Beyond the passionate stress of love and hate.

Forth to the conflict fares each warrior
Seeing with prophet ecstasy, calm-eyed,
Where far before him lies the sepulchre
Of all the sacred hope for which he died.

THE PURPLE ROBE

"L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle."—DANTE.

I PRAY you leave me comfortless,
For nevermore can I surprise
That sweet and passionate distress,
And virgin wildness of your eyes.

With love's most ancient order one,
Initiate and forlornly wise,
I am made captive with the sun
And all the prisoners of the skies.

DAY AND NIGHT

WHILE still the dusk was magical,
And night an unknown way,
I watched the evening shadows fall,
Impatient of the day.

And now when night's a travelled land,
Dusk a familiar face,
I seek from day's departing hand
A sacramental grace.

IN SÆCULA SÆCULORUM

DOWN to the grass the chestnuts sway
A shower of undissolvéd snow
With flowery laughter—can they know,
With every little wind of May
Their loveliness must drift away ?

O falling blossoms, laughing still,
What secrets have your branches stored
Deep in your sun-steeped blossoms' hoard,
That so your wealth of bloom is poured
Forth to the Sun and the winds' will ?

Lo ! all their branches flash to me
Their scorn of such a questioning.
With light, a silvery sound, they sing :
Our will, is with the will of spring
And all the years' desire ; and we
Die thus into eternity.

TO EITHNE

ALL the swift loveliness your girlhood
 knew
Is hid away ;
No longer, unregarded as they flew,
Your tresses play :
Yet there is something in your mien and
 mood
More gravely gay.

No more a child's distress of tears unshed
Troubles your mind ;
No longer, with sweet tears for a flower dead
Your eyes grow blind :
But, sweetheart, there is something in your
 eyes
More wisely kind.

TO A POET

I TOO, with Ireland, loved you long ago
Because you sang, as none but you could sing,
The cause we held the dearest ; now I know
How vain your love was, and how mean a thing.

And not to you whose heart went anywhere
Her sorrow's holy heritage belongs :
You could have made of any other air
The little careful mouthfuls of your songs.

COMMUNION

FOR solace of all lonely things
That have no heed of day or night,
Beside the poplars, grey and still,
Beside the poplars still and high,
Where bats fly whistling in dim light,
And draw the night on with their wings,
And dark, unmoving shadows lie
On paths that know strange visitings,
I go with will like the wind's will
For solace of earth-exiled things.

PESSIMISTS

THE world-fruit withers on the tree
Since there is none to pluck, for we
Who walk beneath the burdened
boughs

Go sadly, with earth-bending brows
Saying, "In some age of old
These branches bowed with living gold."
Saying, "Earth's latest fruit is shed
And all her sweetness harvested."
And only when some golden gift
Falls at our very feet, we lift
Our heads awhile, and sighing, say,
"How strangely in earth's memory stay
These quaint half-hidden things that hold
Something of the age of gold."

POPLARS

I AM no longer worthy, O my trees,
Alien I am in your high companies,
The royal quiet of your silver ways
My spirit like a king uncrownéd flies.

From that high kingliness ye may not bend
But even your silence seems to beckon me :
O stay me not, I have a path to tread
And ways ye know not of await my feet.

And it may be I shall return again,
But I shall come no longer bowed and sad ;
I shall come crowned a king, and in my train
The conquered glories of an alien land.

INVOCATION

SPIRIT whose beauty has so linked my dream
Of that fair world to this that I would deem
That other world scarce worthy of a thought,
Or high endeavouring, were it not wrought
Of that same loveliness which fashioned thine :
Here at thy beauty bowed as at a shrine
How shall I praise, how shall I sing you sweet ?
Along this path made quiet by your feet
I come with homage of a heart grown still
With adoration,—Flame of beauty, fill
This silence out of adoration wrought ;
Thou shepherdess of every holy thought,
Goddess of Quiet, Light of hidden ways
Come as the quiet evening to the day's
Most sacred hour, as dusk to the bowed head
Of eve to holy silence quieted :
Come as the golden moonrise, silently
Temper the white stars' cold austerity ;
And make this waiting heaven of my love
Worthy of thee as the white ways above.

TO THE END OF DAYS

I WOULD seek out all frail immortal things
To make your praise ;
That men may think of you and dream and dream
To the end of days.
When the grey world a phantom goes
By that last way,
Your name will breathe again on shadowy lips
And men will say :
“The stars that are a living song of light
By flaming seraphs hymned,
Burn low, but far beyond their wavering night
Her beauty burns undimmed.”
No empty praise, beloved, this I bring
Out of a bleeding heart ;
Because I know all sorrow and joy to come
Have sundered us apart.
All the long, sorrowful, glad years to come
To the end of days,
Beloved, have hidden your beauty away from me,
Who sing your praise.

THE DANCER

DANCE, dance with your laughter-filled
eyes
And your red lips apart:
You are dancing beside the red sea
Of the blood of my heart.

Dance, dance though the troubled waves glimmer
A terrible white :
Oh, it is not the moon that is shining
With such a pale light.

Dance, dance, though the waves have ebbed back
From that nebulous coast,
Can your sorrow bring back the red tide
To the heart of a ghost?

THE HALF-DOOR

DARK eyes, wonderful, strange and dear
they shone,
A moment's space;
And wandering under the white stars I had
gone
In a strange place.

Over the half-door careless, your white hand
A moment gleamed;
And I was walking on some great star-heaped
strand,
For ever it seemed.

I would give all that glory to see once more,
A moment's space,
Your eyes gleam strange and dark above the
half-door,
Your hand's white grace.

MEMORY

IT touched the city, and over all its clamour
Laid suddenly the peace of lonely ways ;
Silent it stands, finding the ancient glamour
Purple-robed as in the kingly days.

It touched the trees that all day long had slumbered
As souls that wait the resurrection call ;
And at its touch they stood forth disencumbered
Of daylight that clung round them like a pall.

It touched my heart, and deep within it lying
(The barriers of a thousand ages gone)
The spirit woke and knew the life undying,
And freedom-winged sprang up to meet the dawn.

ON THE EDGE OF THE DESERT

PERHAPS we stood together, you and I,
Hopeless and motionless by some grey sea
That mocked monotonous our sad hearts' cry,
Seeing all joyous things go drifting by
Afar beyond our calling. Or it may be

That we two went together where the glow
Of some great joy that burned to noonday heat
Had parched our hearts away, and we would go
To some valley far distant, where we might know
Sorrow a dew about our burning feet.

Belovéd, what of all our wandering ?
Either joy dead or sorrow a fugitive
For ever, and this only a certain thing ;
Your eyes, tear-dimmed, seek mine for comforting ;
And there is no comfort that I can give.

UNDER THE HILL

SINCE they are gone whose wondering
eyes
Saw no sun rise, nor in its light
Hold a God hidden; in their night
No moon without its magic rise.

Uncomprehended, strange and far
Move all the stars within the deep
With sun and moon, and exiled keep
Their old high converse, star with star.

Only by dreams initiate
Or death, we wait the homing tide
When the dream-heavy gates swing wide
The gate of horn—the ivory gate.

A SONG IN PRAISE OF LOVE

LOVE that is lord of happy hours
Can pipe in many lays :
Sing like a bird in leafy bowers,
Or gladden lonely ways.

To meek or proud, to low or high,
When that old tale is told ;
Though love be shyest of the shy
He can outface the bold.

For love, though he be tyrant, dowers
His captive with such grace,
That over all the world he towers
And wears a kingly face.

Ah love, my lord, if I could sing
Thy praises manifold ;
The books that all the world could bring
Would not my ditty hold.

HOMAGE

TO the wind the trees bow,
And the sedge to the little breeze,
And my heart to you, white brow,
And deeper than these.

When the wind passes
And the little breezes die,
The sedge will be raised from the grasses,
The trees to the quiet sky.

Trees will find homage new
And the sedge unmindful be :
But my heart bows to you,
White brow, eternally.

THE FAUN

TELL me, O happy wandering shade, who knew
Our earth in gladder times, before that horde
Horse-hearted, lust-embittered, heavy-eyed,
Trampled the golden fields of Arcady
With leaden hooves. O happy, happy shade,
When the hours went light-hearted, and the earth
Had still a music for their dancing feet.
O happy shade, speak, speak to me of days
Sated with golden hours that leaped at last
To glorious consummation on the pyres
Of their own dying splendour ; and of dusk
That led to life anew with new delight ;
When voices, sweeter than the breath of dawn,
Sang, mellow-throated, through the evening woods :
Or Pan himself, low breathing melody,
Made all the listening woods with slumber glad ;
Until the moon in her far quiet world,
Grew pale with envy of your forest joys :
O wandering shade, what joy of all your joys
Has drawn you with its very memory
From Lethe's ways to peer with wistful eyes
Upon the threshold of a world more grey ?

AN EPILOGUE

COME, heart, and put away your pain,
For it is nothing new,
That I must face the fight again
With none to friend but you ;
Come on beneath the changing skies
For still the quest is new,
While there is still a sun to rise
An earth to catch the dew.

THE PILGRIM

A MYRIAD golden suns have burned
Into my heart and left it cold,
And all the old time seems but a tale
To some half listless hearer told :
Some drowsy half articulate rhyme
In this dim ingle nook of time.

O fiery-hearted days of old,
In vain you flowed a burning tide ;
In vain you poured your spendthrift gold :
The vanishing splendour of your pride
Lives but a flickering torch to light
My feet into a deeper night.

THE POPLARS

AS I went dreaming
By the grey poplar trees,
They bent down and
whispered
Words like these.

“ In a far country
There is a lonely glen,
Hushed with the foot-fall
Of shadowy men.

“ Shadowy and silent,
And grey amongst the trees
That have long forgotten
The sound of the breeze.

“ And one tall poplar
Grows in that land ;
The chain of God’s silence,
Held in his hand.”

This I heard
As I went dreaming,
By the grey poplars
In the purple evening.

THE END OF THE QUEST

O HEART, to follow after
For all your days,
Where with light feet she goes
Laughing to the wild rose,
And in her laughter
The wildness of forest ways.

O heart, O heart, to find her
In the deep wood,
Lighting a moment's space
Some shadow-haunted place ;
Creep there behind her
Enthralled of the quiet mood.

O heart, O heart, to clasp her !
Heart, foolish, proud,
Would not the light grow sad,
O blind one, clasped of shadow ?
Will sunset gates of jasper
Swing wide to the east-cold cloud ?

ANGUS—I

SWEET, for your sake they are in league
with us, the wind and air,
For deep within the heart of earth is
pulsing everywhere
The golden heart of Angus; all its loveliness
and pride
Are but the joy of him who has the living
earth for bride.
This summer air, light wanderer, that laughs
upon the wind
Of his own singing gladdens all the path our
feet must find;
We cannot stray from love's highway who go
as the wind wills
For Danaan laughter lingers in the heart of
the green hills.

ANGUS—II

I BROUGHT your letter with me to the fields,
And read it in the silence of the trees:
And, surely, only your own self had brought
A joy my heart holds holier than these,
Your wild and sweet and maidenly wise words
That on the autumn greyness of my thought
Came flashing down like gold and silver birds.
Sweetheart, in your own praise I did you wrong :
For, wondering at the wisdom of your days
And setting forth my wonder in a song
I, too, forgot awhile, in this blind age,
That all the ways of Angus are your ways
And all his wisdom is your heritage.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE HAZELS

ALL along the way that winds beside the
faery mound
Where the wind-blown bells beneath the
hazel branches sound,

Quietness and peace were on the trees as we
went by :

Glad with peace and quietness we wandered,
you and I.

Bending back you smoothed away the tresses
from your eyes,

Faery grace in every feature, I, with no surprise,
Would have seen you float away upon the air's
deep blue :

But your human heart, my bird, was here with
me I knew.

Child, I think from out that world of beauty
you were sent ;

In your guiding presence fearless I a stranger went :
I a child of night-time, you a daughter of the sun,
For the twilight time, my bird, I knew had
made us one.

CHILDREN OF KINGS

LISTLESS the world dreams on with heavy lids;
All beauty lives but in dead carven stone ;
Grandeur is shut into the pyramids :
Our love repeats some ancient singer's moan :
And all our striving can but bring again
A life wrought out and perfected by ancient men.

O miserable race to live so late,
We can but worship that which taught the Greek ;
Knowing that great perfection, 'tis our fate
To lose, by very knowledge, that we seek :
Save where an instant only, through some dream
Of the world's passion, the white limbs of Helen
gleam.

THE ENCHANTRESS

BECAUSE you went beside me, smoothing
lightly
Your light tresses the wind set wavering,
All the hours went winged with immortal pinions,
And a falling blossom seemed an eternal thing.

Because you went beside me, touching lightly
White-plumed apple-blossoms with whiter hand,
Leafy ways seemed full of eternal sunlight,
The lawn we wandered over a faery land.

Because you went beside me, laughing lightly,
Circling ripples of sound to a silent shore,
Sorrow went winging away from my heart for ever,
Home to the silence winging for evermore.

ENVY

PINE trees swaying, swaying slowly,
Envy not my lady so,
Though she moves with lovelier motion
Than your swaying boughs can show.

Sigh not, little breeze, O sigh not
In the tree-tops everywhere ;
Though you have no sound more joyous
Than her laughter on the air.

Pout not so your lips, red rosebud,
Red lips green engarlanded ;
Though her mouth has lovelier moulding
Round her soft lips' lovelier red.

Envy not, O wild red rosebud,
Sighing breeze, and pine tree tall,
One whose beauty makes the world you
Live in, lovelier for you all.

THE PATH

TREMULOUS grey of dusk
Deepening into the blue,
It is the path that leads
Ever to you.

Child of the dusk, your eyes,
Quietly light my way :
Quiet as evening stars,
Quiet and grey.

All the magic of dusk,
Tremulous grey and blue,
Gathers into my heart,
Quiet for you.

THE UNPITYING

I HAVE been traitor to the stars,
A renegade from sun and dew ;
O heart that fixed my prison bars,
I have been faithful still to you.

I know the sun is comrade true,
And still a friend in every star
I know, and round me falls the dew :
O heart, still cold to me you are.

IN MEMORIAM

WHILE the weak music went vacillating
in waves
And while my heart went with it, even
as one that craves
Companionship of the unknown, sweetheart,
you came,
Flashing through my vague night of thought
a sudden flame,
And all my heart was yours : lo, with bowed,
reverent head
I who but loved you living, worship you dead.

But you have fled again, and nought but the
unknown
Faces my faltering steps, and I am all alone.
Tell me, tell me, is there no power at love's
command
Whereby my heart may reach unto that morning
land
Where your brave heart goes glad for earth's
night vanished ?
I who but loved you living, worship you dead.

O sweet and glad brave virgin spirit who alone
Braved all the unsounded depth and night of
the unknown,

How could my sad heart's weak and futile
questioning

Have gained to that clear heaven from whence
your spirit's wing

Caught from the unrisen sun its glory of
morning red ?

I who but loved you living, worship you dead.

AN ENDING

BETWEEN your words that seem like the
old words,
Between your thoughts that hold no hint
of change,
Falls softly as the silent wings of birds,
Breathes softly something sorrowful and strange.
So be it. Let us part, I have no blame.
What other use had life ? For this I came
To know a little joy, a little strife,
A moment of eternal agony ;
These to have known, and then to cease to be :
How can I blame you, sweet, who gave me all,
Giving naught, though my heart in ashes fall
It will arise to find in a new life
The old joy perhaps, perhaps the ancient strife.
But this I know, with the old sorrow moved
Of those who love not as the wise have loved.

KNOWLEDGE

LIKE a shadow I go in sunlit ways.
Why have you set me on this crazy path ?
From the warm sun-life I must go apart.
I must go in the shadows, for my heart
Is like the waning moon with a vain love.
Yet with a glad quiet heart I move,
Lords of the flaming hours ; for one who hath
A king's brow, and the proud quiet of a king
About him for apparel, and a king's voice,
Though his voice be the silence, whispered to me
Under the moon-white branches such a thing
As would make men in the cold ground rejoice,
For all their dead hearts, knowing of things to be.

FROM "THE BOOK OF THE PILGRIM"

WITH sorrow I have coloured all my days,
And I have scattered in unfrequented ways
Dead leaves out of the forest of my thought.
O flaming hours long vanished I have sought
Your flying feet in ways that knew you not,
With tears and fruitless supplications sent
Against the high implacable battlement
Of heaven, and cried out with a loud despair
To your unheeding towers and highways fair.
O fiery minarets, once I walked within
Your windy ways exultant, till the sin
That hurled me down to walk these wintry lands
Plucked at my heart with cruel curv'd hands.
Exult not, tireless splendours, I have gone
Within thy walls, with radiant vesture shone,
But I have found a radiance dearer far
Than any you can show, though every star
Pours a glad homage at your dancing feet.
For I have gone in lonely ways to meet
One who beneath the quiet sickle moon

Comes out of the silence that is her dún
With feet of moon-white radiance, and I find
A dearer music on this wintry wind
Than all your songs, O choiring voices high,
Though all the heavenly fields eternally
Swell your glad chorus.

TO THE LADY OF THE POPLARS

A SONG for you, a song I made
Of glimmering moons and moon-white
ways,
And branches woven into shade
Where quiet goes ; to make your praise,
I sought in these, and dreams of these,
My Lady of the Poplar trees.

Ah, deeper quiet he must seek,
And deeper-shadowed ways I ween :
Peace hidden of no earthly trees,
Radiance no earthly moon has seen,
He must seek out who sings to please
My Lady of the Poplar trees.

RELIGIO FEMINÆ

THERE are some girls I know dress
thus and thus
Because of Winter, Summer, Autumn,
Spring,
Or some such thing ;
Slaves of the year, and yet for all their fuss
They will be left by a sudden season
Dressed out of reason.
But you, sweetheart, for all your carelessness
Have never fear of treason
From any season,
For all the year
Like a girl friend
Is with you, sweet,
From beginning to end :
So there is the year's reason
In all your dress.

AT SUNSET

TO all who went adventuring at the last,
And to new voyages at sunset passed,
Too brave at heart, too high of hope, to see
Their sky horizoned by mortality.
Oisîn, who left the ease that age had earned,
That he might win to where the Fianna burned;
And him who found new hopes invincible
Because the sea had something yet to tell:
And many another one who, scorning death,
Went forth enkindling with his latest breath
To glory and a never-dying flame,
The funeral pyre that lights a hero name.
These lines I consecrate that they may aid
Me when I go upon that last crusade,
For though the west be grey and no light linger
Where beckoned once the sunset's flickering finger,
No business of the earth will hold me back
From seeking out where they have found a track.
I will launch forth elate, and leave again
These little harbours and the ways of men,
And light again all that old western fire
With the red sunset of my last desire.

*L*ORDS of the morning, since you set
Within this ancient heart,
The flame that burned my youth away
And set my life apart:
I bring you in this urn of truth
The dust-white ashes of my youth.



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